

THE ROOT OF EVIL

BY THOMAS DIXON



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SYNOPSIS

Stuart, southern lawyer in New York, is in love with Nan Primrose. His friend, Dr. Woodman, who has a young daughter, is threatened with the loss of his drug business by Bivens, whom he befriended years before. Stuart visits the Primroses.

Nan wants Stuart to accept a place with Bivens' chemical trust. He dislikes Bivens' methods and refuses. Bivens cautions him.

Bivens is in love with Nan. Stuart refuses the offer, and Nan breaks her engagement with the lawyer. Bivens asks Woodman to enter the trust.

Woodman will not yield and sues Bivens' company. The promoter tells the doctor he and Nan are engaged. Harriet Woodman is studying music. Stuart takes Nan for a day in the country.

Stuart pleads with Nan to give up Bivens, but the spell of millions is on her and she yields to it.

"Knowing full well that no ceremony of church or state, no word of priest or judge, no pealing of organ or pomp or pageantry can make this thing a marriage?"

The lover dropped in silence to the window seat and buried his face in his hands in a paroxysm of emotion beyond control. At length he rose and looked at the girl he loved long and tenderly.

"God in heaven! It's inconceivable when I look into your beautiful face! Have you no pity in your heart?" The full lips smiled a cruel little smile.

"Men are strong, Jim. They can stand hard blows. You come of fighting stock. I know that you will survive. I'm sorry to hurt you, Jim, but I must; it's fate. The big world I somehow feel I'm akin to is calling me, and I'm going!"

"And Bivens is this big world! If you will throw me over for money can't you wait until a real man goes with it? It wouldn't be so bad if I felt you had chosen one who was my equal physically and mentally in culture and breeding—but Bivens!"

"You underestimate his ability. You may hate him, but he is a man of genius."

"He is everything you loathe and yet you are going to marry him. You are giving up too easily. Bivens has only a couple of millions, and he may lose them. Don't hold yourself so cheap. If you were on the block for sale I'd give a million for each dimple in your cheeks. The smile that plays about your lips should bring millions. Your deep dark eyes, I swear, are worth a million each."

"Hush, Jim, dear, we must go now. I can't stand any more. There's a limit."

"Yes, I know. Forgive me."

Without another word he led her from the place, closed the little gate quietly and returned to her home.

Alone inside the parlor they stood in silence a moment, and she took his hand in hers.

"I'm sorry, but it must be goodbye. Your love has been a sweet and wonderful thing in my life!"

"And you throw it aside as a worthless rag."

"No," she answered, smiling. "It shall be mine always. Goodbye."

She raised her lips to his in a cold kiss.

Dazed with anguish, he turned and left. The door closed on his retreating figure, and Nan burst into a flood of passionate tears.

CHAPTER VI

Despair.

TO the very dawn of Nan's wedding day Stuart had refused to give up hope.

The little financier had sent him an invitation, and, worst of all, had called to ask that he act as his best man. He refused so curtly that Bivens was deeply wounded.

"But I say, Jim, that's all rot. I want you to stand by me. I've always taken as much of your friendship as you would give and been grateful for it. I don't make new friends easily. I want you, and you've just got to do it."

Stuart shook his head and firmly set his jaws. A grim temptation flashed through his imagination. If he should accept it might be the one thing which would prevent Nan's betrayal of her love at the altar. Might he not by the power of his personality, the hypnotic force of his yearning passion and will, stop the ceremony? In the moment of deathlike silence which should follow the minister's words asking if there

were any doubts known why these two should not be made one, might not a single movement of his body at that moment, a groan of pain, a sob, a cry of agony in a supreme act of his will, cause the white figure to reel and fall at his feet? It was possible. But it would be too cheap. It would be a worthless victory, a victory of the flesh without the spirit, and he refused to take the body without the soul.

With a frown he turned to Bivens: "It's no use talking, Cal, I've made up my mind. I won't do it."

"Well, if you won't you won't," the little man said with a sigh. "At least you'll come to the church. For God's sake, let me get a glimpse of one friendly face! I'll be scared to death. You know, I'm not used to this."

Stuart smiled: "All right, I'll be there."

But when the fateful morning came Stuart was stunned by the feeling of incredible despair which crept into his heart. The day was chill and damp. Dull, grayish, half black clouds rolled over the city from the sea—clouds that hung low and wet over the cold pavements without breaking into rain.

He knew that Nan was as superstitious as the old black mammy of the south who had nursed her. Aunt Sallie had come to New York for the wedding of her "baby." Stuart thought of the old saying, "Happy is the bride the sun shines on." As the hour of noon approached despair slowly settled over his heart.

How could he reconcile himself to the horrible reality? A marriage so did, cold, vulgar to such a man—this little tobacco stained, bead eyed weasel.

He rose, breathing hard and brushed a tear from his eye—a tear that had come unbidden in spite of his iron will.

His heart fairly shrieked its cry of despair. He moved mechanically toward the church and walked from his reverie to find himself jammed in a solid mass of humanity. Never before had he realized the utter vulgarity of a public wedding. He forced his way into the side door and stood waiting for the arrival of the bride and groom. When Bivens came the sight of him roused the slumbering devil in Stuart. The excitement of his triumph had nervously steadied the little man's nerves. Never had his shrimplike figure looked so slippery and plausible.

He extended his slender hand and touched Stuart's in passing. To save his life the lawyer could not repress a shudder. In that moment he could have committed murder with joy. The agony of defeat was on him. He felt in that moment his kinship with all the rebels and disinherited of the earth.

At last the bride came and the surplined choir moved slowly and solemnly down the aisles through a sea of eager faces as the great organ pealed forth the first bars of the wedding march from "Lohengrin."

Nan was leaning on the arm of a stranger he had never seen before, an uncle from the west. She was pale, deathly pale, and walked with a hesitating movement as though weak from illness. Suddenly his heart went out to her in a flood of pity and tenderness. He tried to make her feel this, but she passed without a glance. She had not seen him.

Stuart listened to the ceremony with a vague impersonal interest as if it were something going on in another world. A single question was burning itself into his brain—the price of a woman! "Have we all our price?" he asked, searching deep into his own soul. Something pathetic in the white face of the bride had touched the deepest sources of his being.

"Have I, too, my price, oh, beautiful soul?" he cried. "Would I sell my honor for a million? No. For ten, fifty, a hundred millions? No—not in the market place, no—but would I sell by a compromise of principle in the secret conclave of my party—at a sale the world could never know—would I sell for the presidency of the republic? Or would I sell now to win this woman? Would I? If so, I should hold her blameless. Have all men and all women a price if we but name it? Answer! Answer!" And then from the depths of his being came the burning words:

"No! I swear it. No!"

He looked up with a start, wondering vaguely if the crowd had heard this cry.

No; they were intent on the drama at the altar. The minister was saying:

"What God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

"God! Surely he didn't say 'God,'" Stuart brooded. "Does God, the august, mysterious, awful creator of the universe, work like this? Did not the God of heaven and earth give this woman to him beneath the sunny skies of the south while their souls sang for joy?"

They were moving again down the aisle, the organ throbbing the recession from Mendelssohn. A wave of emotion swept the crowd inside, and they became a mob of vulgar, chattering, gossiping fools, swarming over the church as if it were the grand stand of a racecourse, without hesitation tearing down and stealing its decorations for souvenirs.

By a curious law of reaction all resentment and anger were gone, and only a great pity for Nan began to fill Stuart's heart.

That night Stuart entered one of the more dignified and serious theaters just off Broadway. The play was a serious effort by a brilliant young dramatist of the modern school of realism. In two minutes from the rising of the curtain the play had gripped him with relentless power. Slowly, remorseless as fate, he saw the purpose of the author unfold itself in a series of tense and terrible scenes. The comedy over which the crowd laughed with such contagious merriment was even more sinister than the serious parts. No matter what the situation—whether set to laughter, to terror or to tears—beneath it all throbbed one insistent question: "Has the woman who sells herself for money a soul?"

With breathless interest he watched the cruel carving of her body into tiny pieces. Without sniffling, whining or apology, with arms bared and gleaming scalpel firmly gripped in a hand that never quivered once, the author dissected her. Always he could hear this white invisible figure bending over each scene talking to the audience in his quiet, terrible way:

"Well, if she has a soul we shall find it. Perhaps it's here."

With a firm, strong hand the last secret of muscle and nerve and bone was laid bare, and the white face looked into the eyes of the audience through a mist of tears.

"I'm sorry, my friends. But we must face the truth. It's better to know the truth, however bitter, than to believe a lie."

With a soft rush the big curtain came down in a silence that could be felt. The dazed crowd waked from the spell and poured into the aisles, while Stuart still sat gripping the arms of his seat with straining emotion.

At last he said to himself with choking emphasis:

"He was cruel, inhuman, unjust. I refuse to believe it! She has a soul! She has a soul!"

Next day Stuart went to his office with his mind keyed to a higher pitch of power. He felt that he was on his mettle. The fight was not yet won, but this morning he was winning. He plunged into his work with tireless zeal. Everything he touched seemed illumined with a new light.

At the close of the day's work he was still conscious of an exhaustless pity which had found no adequate expression in his labor on his clients' cases. His mind wandered to the dark silent millions into whose world the doctor had led him that night—millions who have no voice in courts because they have no money to sustain a fight for the enforcement of justice. He had never thought about these people before. They were calling now for his help. Why? Because he had been endowed with powers of head and heart which they did not possess. The possession of these gifts carried a responsibility.

On reaching his club in Gramercy park he saw that the Primrose house was closed. Nan's mother had gone with the bridal party on Bivens' big yacht for a cruise which would last through the summer. Somehow, for all his brave talk he didn't feel equal to the task of seeing that window of Nan's old home from his club. He was about to beat a retreat when he stopped abruptly and the lines of his mouth tightened.

"What's the use of being a coward? I've got to get used to it. I'd as well begin at once."

He deliberately took his seat on the little pillared balcony of the clubhouse and watched the darkened window through the gathering twilight. For the moment he gave up the fight—the devil had him by the throat. He let the tears come without protest. He was alone and the shadows were friendly.

He stepped inside, touched a bell and ordered a cocktail. He placed the glass on the little table by his side and looked at it. What an asinine act, this pouring of poison into the stomach to cure a malady of the soul! He smiled cynically and suddenly recalled something the doctor was fond of repeating.

"My boy, I'm rich so long as there are millions of people in the world poorer than I am."

Perhaps there was an antidote better than this poison. If he could lift the curtain for a single moment in another life more hopeless and wretched than his? It was worth trying.

He rose, left the liquor untouched and in a few minutes was treading his way through the throngs of the lower east side. When he reached the house on Washington square he found Harriet reading in the library.

"Oh, Jim, dear! Where on earth have you been for nearly two days?" she cried. "I haven't seen you since the wedding!"

"Won't you sing for me?" he broke in. "All right!"—She paused and suddenly clasped her hands. "I'll get my mandolin. You've never heard me play that, have you? I've learned 'Way Down on the Swanee Ribber' on it. I know you'll like it."

Stuart listened to her, entranced. He had heard that old song of the



"Tell me what you are thinking about, Jim."

south a hundred times. But she was singing it tonight with a stange, new power. The girl leaned forward at last and laid her friendly hand on his. She had a trick of leaning forward like that when talking to him that had always amused Stuart.

"Tell me what you are thinking about, Jim," she said, a smile flitting around her tender, expressive eyes.

"I was seeing a vision, little pal," he began slowly, "the vision of a gala night of grand opera. Broadway blazed with light, and I was fighting my way through the throng at the entrance to hear a great singer whose voice had begun to thrill the world. At last, amid a hush of intense silence, she came before the footlights, saw and conquered. The crowd went mad with enthusiasm. I lifted my hat and waved it on high until she saw. A beautiful smile lighted her face, and straight over the heads of the people she blew me a kiss."

The tiniest frown clouded the girl's brow.

"Who was she, Jim?"

"One who shall yet sing before kings and princes. I call her 'Sunshine.' Her name is Harriet Woodman."

"But, Jim, suppose I'm not ambitious? Suppose I'm just a silly little nobody, who only wishes to be loved? How old do you think a girl must be to really and deeply and truly love, Jim?"

Stuart's brow contracted, and he took her hand in his, stroked it tenderly and studied the beautiful lines as they melted from the firmly shaped wrist into the rounded arm and gracefully molded body.

"I'm afraid you've asked a bigger question than I can answer, dear," he said, with serious accent. "I've been wondering lately whether the world hasn't lost the secret of happy mating and marrying. A more beautiful even life I have never seen than the one in the home of my childhood. Yet my mother was only fourteen and my father twenty-one when they were married. Now folks only allow themselves to marry in cold blood, calculating with accuracy their bank accounts. My mother had been married six months at your age, and yet here I sit on a pedestal and have the impudence to talk to you as a child!"

"But you're not impudent, Jim," she broke in eagerly, "and I understand."

"I'm beginning to wonder," Stuart continued, "whether nature made a mistake when she made woman as she is. I once knew a girl of fifteen to whom I believe life was the dearest tragedy or the highest joy of which her heart will ever be capable. Else why did the blood come and go so quickly in her cheeks?"

A sudden flush mantled Harriet's face, and she turned away that he might not see. Stuart's head bent low and rested between his hands.

"I loved such a little girl once, dear!"

Harriet's face suddenly flushed with joy. It was too wonderful to be true, but it was true! And he had chosen this curious way to tell her. Her voice sank to the softest whisper as she bent closer:

"And you love her still, Jim?"

His head drooped lower as he sighed: "I loved and lost her, little pal! She was married two days ago. She came to the great city, learned its ways and sold herself for gold."

(Continued in Friday's Issue.)

\$100 REWARD, \$100.

The readers of this paper will be pleased to learn that there is at least one dreaded disease that science has been able to cure in all its stages, and that is Catarrh. Hall's Catarrh Cure is the only positive cure now known to the medical fraternity. Catarrh being a constitutional disease, requires a constitutional treatment. Hall's Catarrh Cure is taken internally, acting directly upon the blood and mucous surfaces of the system, thereby destroying the foundation of the disease, and giving the patient strength by building up the constitution and assisting nature in doing its work. The proprietors have so much faith in its curative powers that they offer One Hundred Dollars for any case that it fails to cure. Send for list of testimonials.

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SHERIFF'S SALE OF VALUABLE REAL ESTATE.—By virtue of process issued out of the Court of Common Pleas of Wayne county, and State of Pennsylvania, and to me directed and delivered, I have levied on and will expose to public sale, at the Court House in Honesdale on

FRIDAY, JUNE 6, 2 P. M.

All the defendant's right, title and interest in the following described property—viz:

All that certain piece, parcel or tract of land, situate in the Township of Manchester, county of Wayne, and State of Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows:

BEGINNING for a corner at the northeasterly corner of land belonging to E. K. Barnes, and commonly called the Cole Flat, on the bank of the Delaware River; thence in a southwesterly direction along the easterly side of the Cole Flat lot and the H. Lerons lot, let the distance be more or less, to a corner in the line of land formerly belonging to Robert Halsey, and now belonging to Erastus Lord estate; thence in a somewhat southeasterly direction along the said Erastus Lord estate to a corner of the C. G. Armstrong lot, let the distance be more or less; thence in a somewhat northeasterly direction along the line of lands belonging to C. G. Armstrong and Kenney Brothers to the Delaware River, let the distance be more or less; thence up the Delaware River to the place of beginning.

CONTAINING one hundred forty (one hundred forty) acres, more or less, and commonly called the Gore lot. Being the same property conveyed by William M. Kellam et ux. and Coe F. Young et ux. to George Gould, by deed dated the 9th day of February, 1904, and recorded in the office for the recording of deeds in and for Wayne county in deed book No. 92, page 128, and being the same land that George Gould and wife by their deed dated the 18th day of July, 1910, recorded in Wayne county deed book No. 101, page 191, granted and conveyed to Gould Lumber Company.

Seized and taken in execution as the property of The Gould Lumber Company at the suit of First National Bank of Hancock, N. Y. Judgment, \$3,000. No. 23 Jan. Term, 1912. Attorney McCarty.

TAKE NOTICE.—All bids and costs must be paid on day of sale or deeds will not be acknowledged.

FRANK C. KIMBLE, Sheriff.

SHERIFF'S SALE OF VALUABLE REAL ESTATE.—By virtue of process issued out of the Court of Common Pleas of Wayne county, and State of Pennsylvania, and to me directed and delivered, I have levied on and will expose to public sale, at the Court House in Honesdale, on

THURSDAY, MAY 29, AT 2 P. M.

All the defendant's right, title, and interest in the following described property—viz:

All those three certain lots or parcels of land situate in the township of Damascus, county of Wayne and state of Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows, to wit:

The first, beginning in the north line of land conveyed to Z. & P. Wilcox at a heap of stones south-west corner of lands conveyed to Z. & P. Wilcox; thence south seventy-seven degrees west eighty-four and seven-tenths rods to a corner; thence north one hundred six and one-half rods to a stones corner; thence east eighty-two and one-half rods to a corner; and thence south eighty-seven and one-half rods to the place of beginning. Containing fifty acres being the same more or less. Being the same land which Samuel H. Skinner by deed dated May 7, 1904, and recorded in Wayne County in D. B., No. 92, page 464, granted and conveyed to John G. Skinner.

The second—Beginning at a heap of stones the south-western corner of land conveyed by F. Stewardson and L. Smith to E. B. Keesler; thence by lands formerly of Nathan Mitchell north eighty degrees west thirty-two rods to a hemlock corner; thence by lands formerly of Z. & P. Wilcox south seventy-seven degrees west seventy-three degrees west seventy-three and one-half rods to a stones corner; thence by land form-

erly of John Torrey north eighty-seven and one-half rods to stone corner; thence east one hundred and three and one-tenth rods to stones corner in the western line of land formerly of E. B. Keesler; thence along said line south seventy-six and six-tenths rods to the place of beginning. Containing fifty acres be the same more or less.

The Third—Beginning at a stake and stones at the south-east corner of Jesse O. Mosler's lot, thence east thirty-eight and one-tenth rods to a stake and stones; thence north one hundred and five rods to a stake and stones on a level spot of ground about two rods west of a ledge of rocks; thence west thirty-eight and one-tenth rods to a stake and stones and thence south one hundred and five rods to the place of beginning. Containing twenty-five acres of land be the same more or less. The second and third piece above described being same land which Delia C. Haynes by deed dated July 3, 1906, and recorded in Wayne County in Deed Book No. 96, page 210, granted and conveyed to John G. Skinner.

On said premises is a house and two barns.

Seized and taken in execution as the property of John G. Skinner, at the suit of Daniel L. Brown, No. 31, June Term, 1911. Judgment, \$1,125. Attorneys, Kimble & Hanlan.

TAKE NOTICE.—All bids and costs must be paid on day of sale or deeds will not be acknowledged.

FRANK C. KIMBLE, Sheriff.

REGISTER'S NOTICE.—Notice is hereby given that the accountants herein named have settled their respective accounts in the office of the Register of Wills of Wayne County, Pa., and that the same will be presented at the Orphans' Court of said county for confirmation, at the Court House in Honesdale, on the third Monday of June next—viz:

First and final account of J. C. Burcher, administrator of the estate of Thomas L. Burcher, Damascus.

First and final account of Frank L. Bedell, administrator of the estate of Helen J. Bedell, Dyberry.

First and final account of Jane Loercher, administratrix of the estate of John Loercher, Honesdale.

First and final account of Homer Greene, administrator of the estate of Charles H. Mills, Lake.

First and final account of Charles J. Stevens, administrator of William F. Stevens, Sterling.

First and final account of John W. Hazleton, administrator of the estate of Angeline H. Masters, Sterling.

First and final account of Helen K. Robacker now intermarried with O. W. Megargel, administratrix of the estate of Mary Robacker, Sterling.

First and final account of Minnie Townsend, executrix of the estate of Lee Calvin Smith, Lake.

First and final account of Adam T. Van Driessen and Walter N. Cornell, administrators of the estate of Ella Gilson, Honesdale.

First and final account of Kate Billard, administratrix of the estate of George Billard, Cherry Ridge.

First and final account of Elizabeth C. Lawyer, administratrix of the estate of Fred E. Lawyer, Honesdale.

W. B. LESHNER, Recorder.

4013.



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